

DEPOSITION

MADE, UNDER OATH, BY

AN ECCLESIASTIC,

TO ATTEST

The Spoliation

OF A

LEARNED FOREIGNER,

BY THE

BRITISH BOARD OF LONGITUDE.



LONDON:

PRINTED BY D. S. MAURICE, FENCHURCH STREET.

1822.



NOTICE.

This Deposition forms the legal proof in a Petition presented to the British Parliament, where a learned foreigner, M. Hoëné Wronski, complains of the spoliation of his scientific productions by the British Board of Longitude.

The Petition to the Parliament, and a Document entitled, *Public Imposture of the privileged Learned and of learned Societies*, are just published in French.

An English translation will be published immediately.

*Deposition of the Rev. Frederick Nolan. Sworn at
the Mansion-House, before the Lord Mayor,
November 14, 1821.*

FREDERICK NOLAN, of Earl Street, in the City of London, clerk, deposes as follows, and declares upon oath,—that, in making this deposition, he is not moved by favour or prejudice towards any of the parties mentioned, but influenced by the simple consideration of justice towards that which he believes to be aggrieved; and that he makes his deposition thus solemnly with the view of obtaining credit to a statement, which so wholly surpasses credibility, that, without such an attestation, he deems it not likely to be believed; viz. :

1. That in “The Nautical Almanack”* for the year 1822, published by the authority, and under the licence (p. xvi.) of the Commissioners of Longitude, a Table of Refractions is given (p. 145. sqq.); and that it is declared, under the same licence and authority (p. i.), “to be computed by a simple formula, *derived originally from theory,*” and more expressly (p. 148.), “to be computed *upon principles,* explained by Dr. Young, in the Philosophical Transactions for 1819.”

2. That by an Act of Parliament (58 Geo. III. cap. xx.), which is published in the same Almanack, a reward is offered (*Ibid.* § 8.) “to any person who may have made *Proposals, Inventions, and Tables, or Corrections and Amendments* of former Inventions and Tables, ingenious in themselves, and useful to Navigation.”

* An official work, destined for the English Marine.

3. That, in reply to the above requisition of the Legislature, and in compliance with both its conditions, a quarto Manuscript, containing a *Correction* of “the theory” from whence the Tables of Refractions, published under the fore-mentioned licence and authority, are derived, and a *Scientific Theory* for a new set of Tables, founded on a general law; was presented to the Board of Longitude by M. Hoëné Wronski, and that the receipt of the Manuscript, containing this Correction and Theory, is acknowledged, by letter of Lord Melville, President of the Board of Longitude, and of Dr. Young, Secretary of the Board of Longitude, respectively dated April 18, 1820.*

4. That in this letter, in which the Secretary of the Board acknowledges the receipt of Mr. Wronski’s Manuscript, he likewise acknowledges the Correction made by that learned foreigner in his theory of Refractions, and declares, that he would “acknowledge to the Board, that Mr. Wronski had detected a *blunder* in his hasty Postscript† on Refractions,” which is offered, under the licence of the Commissioners, as containing “the theory and principles” from whence the Tables of the Nautical Almanack “are originally derived.”

5. That in the Journal of Science‡ for July 1821, (fifteen months after the presentation of the Manuscript of M. Wronski), the Secretary of the Board of Longitude, who, by his office, is conductor of the Nautical Almanack (Act. uti sup. § 21.), republishes “the theory,” offered under the forementioned licence and authority, as containing “the principles” from whence the Tables licenced by the Commissioners are

* This Manuscript was kept ten days by the Board of Longitude, not having been restored to the possession of M. Wronski, but by the official letter of the Secretary of this Board, dated the 28th April, 1820.

† It is under this title of *Postscript*, that we find produced in the Philosophical Transactions for 1819, Doctor T. Young’s Theory of Refractions.

‡ An English periodical work, published under the auspices of the principal learned men in London.

“originally derived;” and in a manner still more full and explicit, exposes its “blunders,” and professes to rectify them in what he styles “a parenthetical *correction* ;” and that “the correction” proposed by the Secretary of the Board of Longitude, and conductor of the Nautical Almanack, is IDENTICAL with that presented by Mr. Wronski to the Commissioners, and acknowledged to have been received by letter of the President and of the Secretary.

6. That in this republication of “the theory,” from whence the Tables of Refractions are stated, under licence of the Commissioners, to be “originally derived,” an entire new section (No. 5) is introduced by its author, (the Secretary), and under his name; and that it proposes new principles, as authority for the forementioned Tables, which not only supersede those offered, under licence of the Commissioners, as authority for the Tables published under their sanction, but which are IDENTICAL with those presented by Mr. Wronski to the Board of Longitude, (fifteen months before), as the foundation of his new Theory and Tables; inasmuch as they contain the general law under the same* theoretical expression, “which” (as that learned foreigner declares, in his *Address to the Board*, p. 70, l. 11.) “being once known, the determination of Refractions is reduced to a simple algorithmic question.”

7. That, while “the correction” of the errors in “the theory” from whence the Tables of Refractions, licenced by the Commissioners, are “originally derived,” stands thus “*acknowledged*” by its very author, not merely filling the capacity of compiler of the Nautical Almanack, but acting in

* The Reverend Mr. Nolan could have said, “having *literally* the same expression,” for in this publication of the law of M. Wronski, a publication really shameless, the Secretary of the Board has not even taken the trouble to change the form of the algebraic expressions, and satisfied himself with the simple finesse of putting the letter ζ instead of the letter ϕ .

the double capacity of annual Commissioner of Longitude and of Secretary to the Board; and while the Tables of Refractions, published under the license and authority of the Commissioners, are left destitute of all authority, unless that which is deduced from the general law, under the theoretical expression, in which Mr. Wronski disclosed his new Theory of Refractions to the Commissioners, allured by the promise of a “reward for *Proposals, Inventions, and Tables, or Corrections and Amendments* of former Inventions and Tables;” this learned stranger not only finds *the reward* of the national service which he has rendered, on the faith of this offer of the Legislature, *withheld by the Commissioners*,—but his *Corrections and Inventions appropriated by the Secretary of the Board*, against whose interference respecting the “Proposals” made by him in reply to the act of the Legislature, he had formally protested, at the time of his entrusting his new Theory of Refractions to the President of the Board.

(Signed) FRED. NOLAN,

*A Clergyman of the Church of England,
established by Law.*

Sworn before me, at the Mansion House,
this 14th November, 1821.

(Signed) MAGNAY, Lord Mayor.

*Letter of the Reverend Mr. Nolan to Lord Melville,
President of the Board of Longitude, having for
its object the production of the preceding Deposition*

8, Earl Street, Finsbury Square.
November 16, 1821.

MY LORD,

IN yielding to the claims of science and the imperious demands of humanity, the painful duty devolves upon me to lay the enclosed document before your Lordship.

When the reflection cast upon the character of the Nation, by the procedure which it details, is compared with the professed object of an act of the Legislature, intended to promote "the honour and interest of the country," I hesitate not to believe, there may be some ground of misconception or error, which I am unable to fathom. Presuming upon this supposition, I take the liberty of laying the enclosed Deposition before your Lordship, to be submitted, at the direction of your Lordship, to the Board of Longitude; in which the power of redressing the grievance of which it complains, is still vested. Whatever be the course which the official discharge of the functions entrusted to them by the Legislature may induce them to pursue, I, at least, acquit myself, by this step, of all responsibility in the consequences that may ensue, should the document which I have furnished be employed, in the attainment of justice, in a more public form, and before an higher tribunal.

I cannot feel the painful duty which has devolved upon me conscientiously discharged, before I have submitted one point, not so much to the justice as to the humanity of the tribunal, before which this distressing case is still at issue. While they appropriate the fruits and withhold the rewards of the toilsome days and sleepless nights of a learned stranger, who, by an unparalleled sacrifice of *his whole fortune* to the interests of science, cast himself upon the faith of the nation : I am bound to attest, in his behalf, from personal knowledge, that * * * * *

[*Note.*—Here follows a sad exposition of the unhappy circumstances to which M. Hoëné Wronski has been reduced in England, in consequence of these injuries.]

MY LORD,

I have the honour to be

Your Lordship's

Most obedient humble Servant,

FRED. NOLAN.

N.B.—This letter and the Deposition itself, remained without answer from Lord Melville, President of the Board of Longitude. After this, a Prelate of the English Church, the Mecænas of the clergy, and one of the first personages in the British Empire, a man of worth and character, wrote to Lord Melville, producing to him the most honourable testimonies for Mr. Nolan, and renewing to him the object of the Deposition of this Ecclesiastic. But this was in vain also; contrary to all expectation, this imposing step remained unnoticed. The same Prelate, being, without doubt, more profoundly penetrated by this injustice, insisted, in a second letter to Lord Melville, on some sort of declaration on his part.—Even this last proceeding was treated with the same disregard, and remained again without answer.